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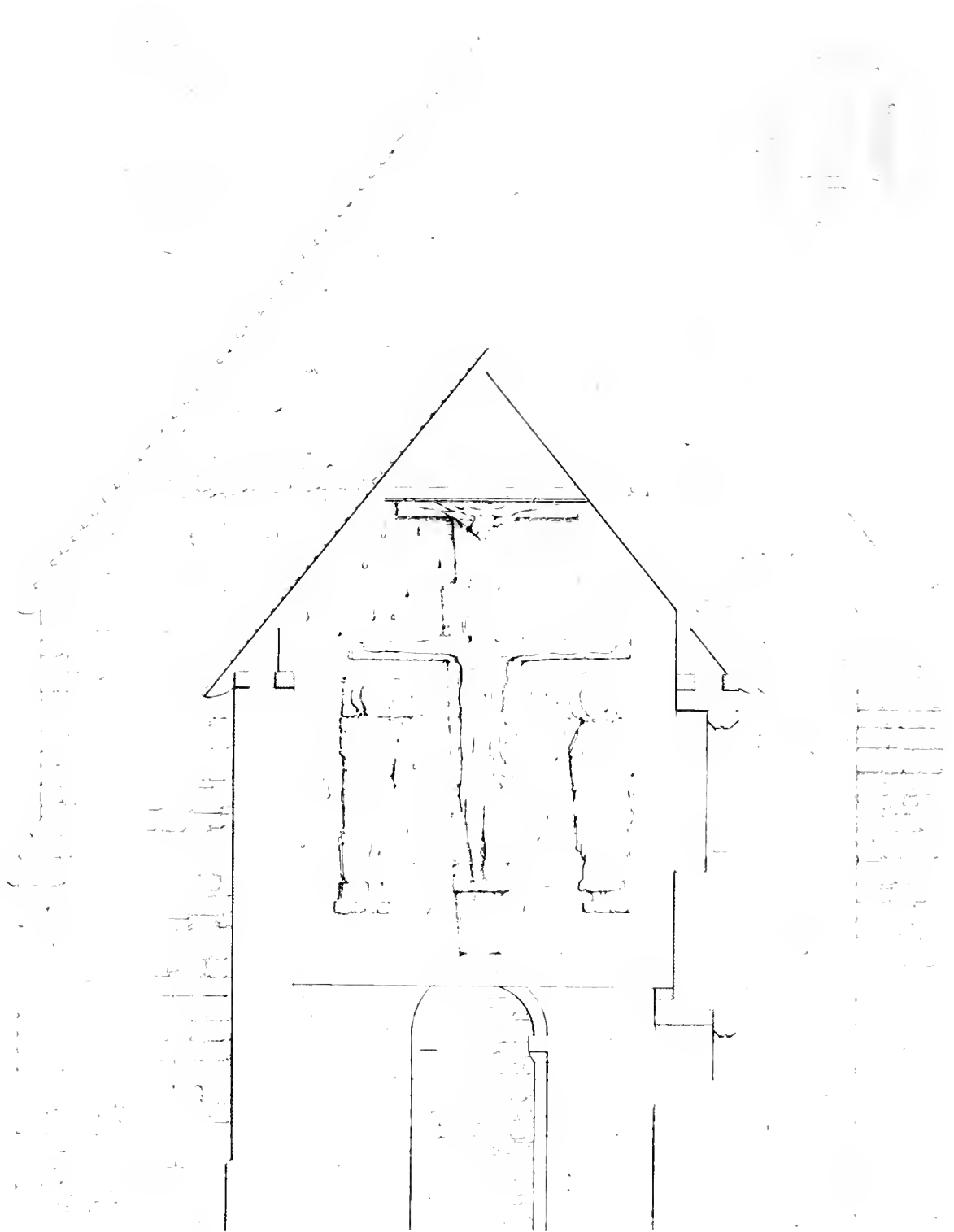












*Section of the church at the altar*

# HEADBOURN WORTHY CHURCH.

BY OWEN B. CARTER, ARCHITECT.

WORTHY is the common name of a family of villages, of which there are four along the bourn of the Itchen, adjoining each other, with distinctive appellations prefixed, Heabourn Worthy, King's Worthy, Abbot's Worthy, and Martyr Worthy. It was written of old, *Wordie*, and in Domesday also, *Ordie*. But the w and the th of the English were the Shibboleth of Norman scribes, as they are of their French descendants at this day; therefore, though Worthy is a pure Saxon word, written *weorðig* or *weorðig*, and signifying a farm, a row of houses, a hamlet, yet the Normans, who wrote chiefly from the oral information of the parties they summoned, boggled at the unpronounceable letters, and diluted them into *Ordie* or *Wordie*. Worthy, therefore, is not a corruption of the ancient Wordie, but the genuine name restored. The manor of Worthy was granted by Kenewalch to the church of Winchester; and afterwards by Edward, in 908.

Headbourn Worthy is the nearest to Winchester of the four villages that bear this common name, and, perhaps, may have received its appellation from being situated at the head or beginning of the bourn, in ascending the stream from Winchester. It is also called Worthy Mortimer, Water Worthy, and Little Worthy. In Domesday, mention is made of two places called *Ordie*, within the precincts of Bertune hundred. At present both Headbourn and King's Worthy are in Barton Stacey hundred; but the name of Worthy Mortimer, marks the former to be the one there described, as being the property of Ralph de Mortemer. It had been one of the manors of Cheping, the Saxon proprietor, whose name has more than once before occurred, and whose estates, for the most part, seem to have fallen into the hands of this great baron. He possessed, however, no considerable interest in it; for it appears by Domesday, that it was originally purchased for three lives only, in the reign of Edward the Confessor; and that as Ralph de Mortemer was the last life, on his

decease the property was to vest in the Abbey of St. Peter. This and the grant *Benemeltune*, are probably some of the earliest records of purchases for lives. Mortemer held also another estate at Worthy, which had been the property of a Saxon or a Dane, named Ezi, and had formerly been reputed to be a manor of itself, but at the time of the survey was annexed to another manor, probably the foregoing one. But *Litel Wordie*, by which appellation Headbourn Worthy is still sometimes popularly called, was given by Henry I. to the new minster, afterwards called Hyde Abbey<sup>a</sup>.

The church at Headbourn Worthy is dedicated to St. Martin, and will be found, upon examination, to exhibit undoubted marks of its Saxon origin, supposing reliance is to be placed upon the generally received opinions as to the architectural peculiarities of that style. The masonry of the original portions, where not concealed by plaster or rough-cast, is exactly similar to that of the Saxon church at Corhampton, in the same county, and is characterized by the long and short courses, or bond stones, so remarkable in that structure. There are no apparent remains of the original windows, or of the north or south doorways, if they ever existed, but the two buttresses on the north side of the nave, and one on the south side of the chancel, together with the west doorway, now disused, are in exact accordance, both in design and execution, with their corresponding features at Corhampton, Earl's Barton, and other buildings now universally attributed to the period of the Saxon dynasty.

The straight-sided chancel arch is also another evidence in favour of the opinion I have formed, as to the high antiquity of this building.

The most interesting feature, however, to be met with in this church, is the rhood, on the exterior of the west wall of the nave, to the delineation of which we have devoted Plate No. 2. It is much to be regretted by every lover of antiquarian research, that this extremely curious specimen of Saxon art has not been handed down to us in a more perfect state; nearly the whole of the figures, which were originally in relief, having been carefully chiselled down to the surface of the surrounding wall. Some portion of the lower draperies, together with the hand and cloud, are still sufficiently perfect to give an idea of the execution of the whole, which appears to have been very similar to that of the curious rhood still in existence on the west wall of the south transept of the neighbouring abbey church of Romsey<sup>b</sup>.

The outline of the figures is still perfectly distinct, and not deficient in a certain rude solemnity of effect, which the consideration of the circumstances under which they were in all probability erected, is much calculated to increase. That the remains are contemporary with the original Saxon building there can be little or no doubt, the

<sup>a</sup> Duthy's Sketches of Hampshire.

<sup>b</sup> Vide Carter's Ancient Sculpture.

hand and cloud being sculptured upon a block of stone forming part of the string course immediately above, which, as may be seen by reference to Plate 1, is of Saxon character in its profile<sup>a</sup>. The feet of the principal figure are also carved upon a portion of the key-stone to the arch of the western doorway. It may be here observed, that the above mentioned string course evidently extended across the whole west end gable, but has been removed where not contained within the more recently erected galilee or chapel, which has been added to this end of the church. This building, from the style of its architecture, cannot date earlier than the latter end of the fifteenth century, and was probably erected for the accommodation of the religious brethren of Hyde Abbey, at Winchester, to which fraternity "Litel Wordie" was given by Henry 1.

It has evidently been divided into two chambers, in the upper of which an altar at some time existed, as its accompanying piscina still remains in the south wall at a convenient height above the remains of the ancient floor.

The whole inside surface of the walls of the upper chamber has been plastered, and entirely covered with the monograms of which we have given an exact representation in Plate No. 2, interspersed with other marks resembling drops, and possibly intended to represent blood or tears. The lower story may have served the purpose of a galilee or porch to the church, or as Bingham denominates it a pronaos, or ante temple, called also narthex. But to whatever purposes the building was applied, it is quite clear that its erection has emanated from a reverence for, and a desire to preserve the highly curious piece of antiquity under our notice.

In the chancel floor is inserted a brass bearing the figure of a man in a priest's dress, with his hands clasped, and the following inscription :

hic jacet Iohes Kent quondam scholaris novi Collegii de  
Wynechestre et filius Simonis Kent de Redynge.  
Unus anime propitiatur Deus.

And from his mouth proceeds a scroll, with these words,

Misericordias Domini in eternum cantabo.

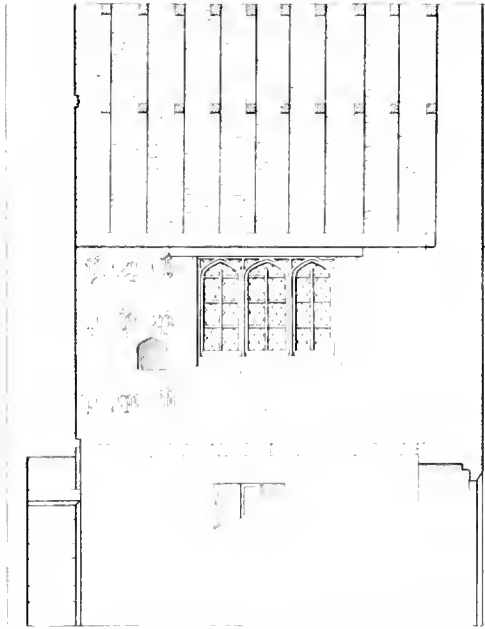
<sup>a</sup> Some members of the Cambridge Camden Society, who have been making a tour of inspection through the north and east of Lincolnshire, have sent reports to their Society of the discovery of seven Saxon towers, —St. Martin's, Waith; St. Giles, Scartho; St. Mary's, Clee; Holy Trinity, Swallow; St. Nicholas, Caburn; St. Mary's, Rothwell; and St. John's, Nettleton. These parishes lie near the high road between Louth and

The person commemorated was, probably, a priest of Headbourn Worthy, and appears to have lived about the age of William of Wykeham, the epitaph alluding to the College of Winchester as a recent foundation.

The exterior of the church presents little to attract attention save as a picturesque object, which is much enhanced by the position of the tower on its southern side. The tower is of early English character, and there are some good windows of perpendicular style, in the south wall of the nave. A slight sketch of the west end is contained in Plate No. 1, on which Plate are also given a longitudinal section of the galilee, a ground plan of the church, and various details, as the buttresses, chancel arch, and string mouldings. There is also a delineation of two corbels which occur in the interior of the south wall of the nave, at the spot marked *D* on the plan, and at a height of about ten feet from the level of the pavement. They are of Saxon character, but I am quite unable to assign any use to which they could have been applied.

The church at present is in a very dilapidated condition; the situation low and marshy, and the north side is propped by buttresses of heterogeneous character, one of the largest of which is of brick. It is not improbable that in the course of a few years it will have ceased to exist, in which case the present notice will not be the less valuable, though necessarily imperfect.

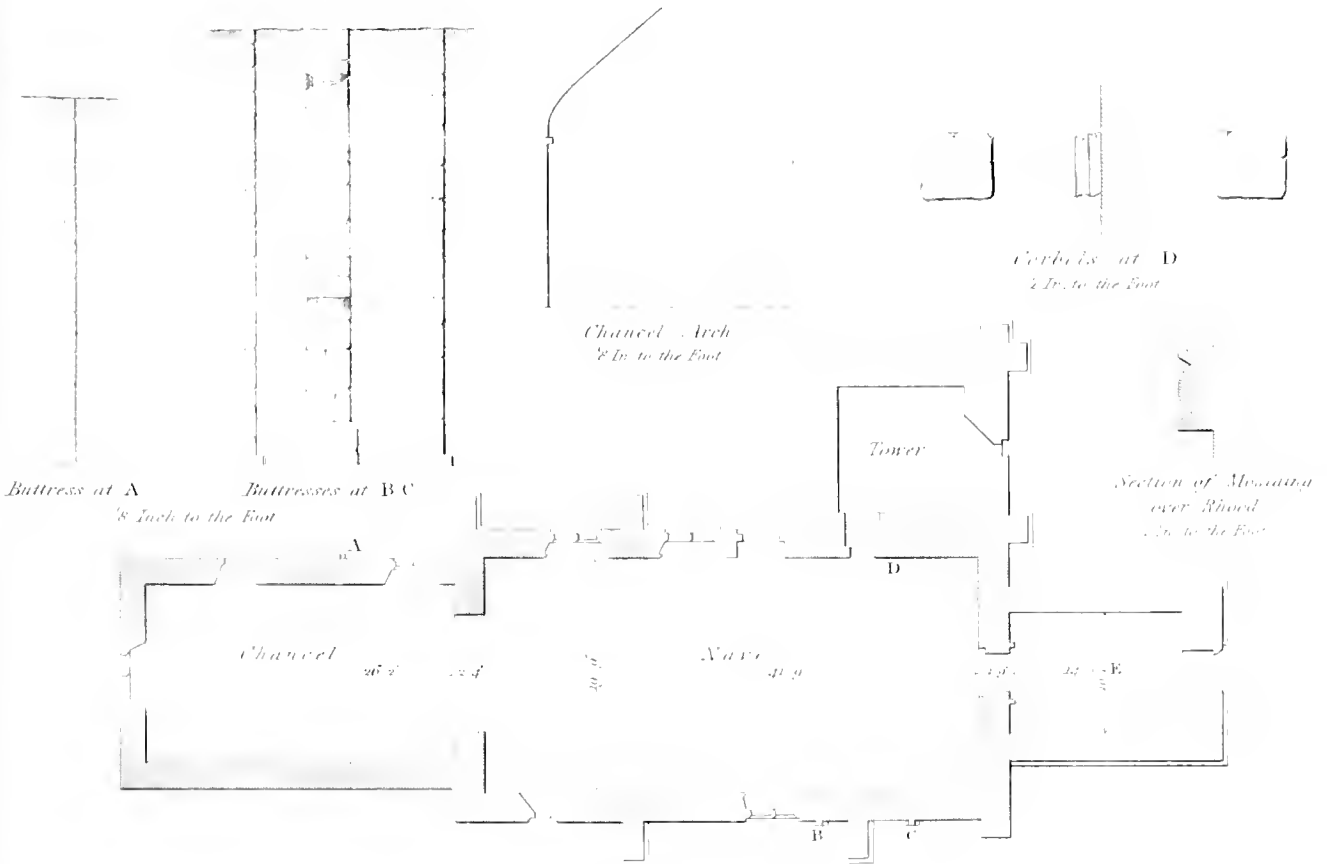
Grimsby. They state that the fonts of Waith, and Seartho, Holton, Caburn, and Clee, are apparently all as old as the towers. They are rude cylindrical stones with some coarse sculptured ornament round the top. The tower at Rothwell is, perhaps, the most complete example of this style. The belfry windows all remain in their original condition. The masonry is very rough sandstone, with large quoins. All the towers are of two stages, and have neither pilasters nor staircase. They also state that the condition of the Lincolnshire churches in the Wolds, and especially near Spilsby, is most deplorable. Many of them are brick rooms in the Pagan style, rebuilt in the last century; some are quite modern, literally of no style at all.



Section at E on plan  
Scale 1/8 Inch to the Foot



View of West end



Ground Plan  
Scale 1/8 Inch to the Foot













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